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REPORT, 1989-90: NEW ENGLAND REGION

The New England Region of the Mariological Society of America held its Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 21, 1989, at Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island. The Reverend Matthew Morry, O.P., S.T.D., Director of The New England Region and Professor of Mariology at Providence College, opened the meeting at 10:00 A.M. and brought greetings of the college to the gathering of one hundred and twenty.

The Keynote Speaker was the international and eminent Fullbright Scholar, the Reverend Lamberto Pasion, O.P., S.T.D., of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila. Fr. Pasion holds advanced degrees from St. Thomas University, Rome, and the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, and was the Dean of the Faculty of Sacred Theology at the University of Santo Tomas. His address was entitled "Mary in Today's World—Reality or Illusion?"

Fr. Pasion noted that history provides us with numerous reports of apparitions of Our Lady, citing those of Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje, and Akita, Japan, among the number. He proposed to offer suggestions on possible explanations about how such visions take place and to provide guidelines relative to judging the credibility of these religious phenomena.

Fr. Pasion set out a careful distinction between *public* revelations, which contain all the truths necessary for our salvation, and *private* revelations, which are effective instruments in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church. Authentic private revelations may indeed deepen our understanding of the Gospel message.

Yet, in such private revelations the message is the important element; the attendant phenomena—e.g., the dancing

of the sun, a spring of fresh water—are merely confirmatory signs of the event or a lure to catch one's attention. Still, even with confirmatory signs there is need for caution, since all knowledge and grace necessary for salvation have already been given by God, and, no matter what the private revelation, one must respond *in Faith* to God's call. Indeed, there are two dangers relative to private revelations to which one must be alerted: presumption and self-deception. For God founded His Church on Faith and not on extraordinary charisms. As the Beloved Disciple noted: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; . . ." (I Jn. 4:1).

So, there are three criteria to help us identify true revelations from the specious and false. First, the truth or message of the revelation must be in total agreement with the teaching of Tradition and Scripture. Second, the visionary must submit to the examination and judgment of the local bishop or of a higher authority in the Church. Third, there will be evident in the seers the effects of humility, fear, obedience and other Christian virtues.

Fr. Pasion then posed the question: How does Mary do it (i.e., appear)? He noted that there are three kinds of visions: (1) sensible forms are divinely present to the seer's mind by means of the senses; (2) sometimes such presence is achieved by means of imaginary form of exclusively divine origin or divinely co-ordinated from those derived from the senses; (3) or the vision occurs by direct impression of intelligible species on the mind.

How, then, should one respond to such revelations? Since the principal element is the message, one is, first, to ponder on it. Secondly, one is to do it (act on the message, i.e., repent, do penance, pray). Lastly, one is to share the fruit of the private revelation with others.

Following an active and well-developed discussion, a Marian Liturgy was celebrated in Aquinas Chapel by the Most Reverend Louis E. Gelineau, D.D., Bishop of Providence. The homilist was the Reverend John J. Reid, O.P. In his homily Fr. Reid showed how Mary, through her prayer

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and continued interest in the Church, intercedes the presence of God, Who is Love, to the believer and is thus truly the Mother of Fair Love.

Luncheon followed the Marian Liturgy. A brief business meeting followed luncheon. Fr. Morry announced that The Mariological Society of America would hold its Annual Meeting at Providence College on May 29, 30, 31, 1990. The members of The New England Region present then approved the suggestion to host a banquet for the members of The Mariological Society of America who would attend the meeting in May, 1990, at Providence College. The meeting adjourned at 2:30 P.M.

REV. MATTHEW F. MORRY, O.P.
Director, New England Region, MSA